

TO: Larry D. Voyles, Director

FROM: Bob Broscheid, Assistant Director
Wildlife Management Division 

PRESENTER: Brian Wakeling, Big Game Management Supervisor

TITLE: Consideration of Proposed Commission Orders 3, 4, and 26 for 2009 Hunting Season.

DESCRIPTION: The Commission will consider and may vote to approve Commission Orders 3 (pronghorn antelope), 4 (elk), and 26 (population management) establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, permit numbers or authorized limits, and open areas for the respective 2009 fall hunting season. A detailed description of all proposals is available for public review at all Department offices.

DATE: November 17, 2008

Summary:

At the August 2007 meeting, the Commission approved a two-year hunt guideline package under which hunt structures and recommendations would be formulated. The Department sought public input on these guidelines between June and August 2007, and received input from about 172 meeting attendees and 98 written responses, which were shared with the Commission at the August 2007 meeting. Per Commission direction, these guidelines will be used through 2010 spring seasons.

Following are the Department's recommendations for:

Commission Order 3 – Pronghorn Antelope (Refer to attached copies of the proposed hunt season structure and permit numbers for unit by unit details.)

The general season permits are recommended to increase by 21 from last year for a total recommendation of 524 permits. The archery recommendation is 381 permits, which is a decrease of 13 permits from last year, although a new hunt in Unit 7 was established with 5 permits. The muzzleloader seasons are recommended for 106 permits, a decrease of 7 permits from last year.

Attached is the Pronghorn Management Plan, which was revised last year. This plan is updated once every two years and reflects the specific management issues and planned activities for implementation within each unit. This plan tiers from Department operational plans.

Archers requested the addition of an archery pronghorn hunt in Unit 7 last year, and this recommendation accommodates that request. The Department received no other substantial feedback from the public regarding the pronghorn hunt structures since the last hunt guideline and recommendation process.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 3 – PRONGHORN ANTELOPE AS PROPOSED.**

Commission Order 4 – Elk (Refer to attached copies of the proposed hunt season structure and permit numbers for unit by unit detail.)

Elk harvest is recommended to allow limited population growth in some areas in conjunction with the Elk Management Plan; otherwise populations will be held stable or allowed to increase slightly in relationship with current environmental conditions. Limited population management zones are still targeted for reduction. This recommendation package will continue to adjust bull to cow ratios to meet or move toward management guidelines. General season permits are recommended at 16,375 permits, an increase of 465 permits from last year (the change comprises an increase of 270 bull elk permits and an increase of 195 antlerless elk permits from last year). Juniors antlerless elk permit opportunities remained unchanged at 1,335 permits (5.4% of standard opportunity, 5% of all opportunity), and archery elk permits are recommended to increase by 30 to 5,629 (the change comprises an increase of 170 bull elk permits and a reduction of 200 antlerless elk permits from last year). Muzzleloader permit opportunities are recommended to decrease by 50 permits to 1,293 (the change comprises a decrease of 50 bull elk permits and no change in antlerless elk permits from last year). And finally it is recommended that CHAMP hunters retain the 10 antlerless elk permits, while a new bull elk CHAMP hunt with 10 permits is recommended in Unit 6A.

The elk permit recommendations were developed in accordance with Commission direction. First, the Commission directed the Department to find opportunities to allow for elk population growth where consistent with habitat conditions. The Department is recommending reductions in antlerless harvest to accommodate herd growth where possible. The Department is recommending continued allocation of permits by weapon type using the Commission approved weapons allocation formula. Bull and antlerless elk harvests are allocated by sex and weapon type using five-year averages of first-choice application demand and five-year averages of hunt success by weapon type; limited opportunity hunts are excluded from this allocation determination as are the 400 archery bull permits added last year for November. And finally, the Commission directed the Department to allocate at least 5% of the total available elk permits as antlerless elk permits to juniors-only seasons to address hunter recruitment goals. The permit allocation in this package for juniors-only antlerless elk permits represents 5.4% of the total recommended elk permits.

Not including limited opportunity, new archery November bull permits, or juniors-only hunts, the targeted and recommended allocations for bull and antlerless elk permits are as follows:

Bull Elk:	<u>Target</u>	<u>Recommended</u>
	65% general	65% general
	30% archery	30% archery
	5% muzzleloader	5% muzzleloader

Antlerless Elk:	<u>Target</u>	<u>Recommended</u>
	78% general	78% general
	16% archery	16% archery
	6% muzzleloader	5% muzzleloader

The recommended allocation for antlerless elk permits achieves the target. Projected harvest for both bull and antlerless seasons are expected to be within one percent of targeted allocation. The Department will continue to use the harvest allocation formula to closely approximate hunter demand.

Limited opportunity hunts are recommended for minor adjustments this year, with a reduction of 65 general permits to 1,667 and a reduction of 5 archery permits to 155. No muzzleloader limited opportunity hunts are recommended.

Recommended adjustments to the over-the-counter nonpermit tag hunts for elk are also relatively minor; portions of Units 28, 31, and 32 are recommended for addition during November 20–December 31, 2009, the Verde Valley Hunt Area is recommended to shift from archery to general, the Little Colorado Hunt Area in Units 4A and 4B has been reduced in size and renamed the Winslow-Holbrook Hunt Area, and the Alamo Hunt Area in Units 16A and 44A has been expanded in size, with a slight shift in season dates to September 18–October 22, 2009.

The hunt recommendation package was coordinated with land management agencies, local habitat partnership committees, and the Forage Resource Study Group in Region 2. The general, muzzleloader, archery, and juniors-only permit allocations were adjusted to address the allocation targets as noted above. Permits for bull and antlerless harvest were managed to meet management guidelines for bull to cow ratios and forage use as noted in the hunt guidelines and the Elk Management Plan.

Attached is the Elk Management Plan, which was revised last year, as a reference. This plan reflects direction provided by the Commission at their August 2007 meeting, and the hunt recommendation package is in alignment with it. This plan tiers from Department operational plans.

The Department received no substantial feedback from the public regarding the elk hunt structures since the last hunt guideline and recommendation process. The Department is working

with the archery elk hunting community to survey hunters that applied for November archery elk hunts in 2008.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 4 – ELK AS PROPOSED.**

Commission Order 26 – Population Management Seasons

Population management seasons are recommended for implementation in generally the same units, seasons, and permit levels as last year. "Designated elk" or "designated buffalo" is the legal wildlife in each of the population management seasons for elk and buffalo so that the Director may designate the desired legal animal for harvest when the permits are issued. Although the Department is recommending that the Commission authorize 1,325 elk (1,020 general, 25 HAM, and 280 archery-only), 675 javelina (310 general, 250 HAM, and 115 archery-only), 156 buffalo (all general), and 122 bear (68 general, 26 HAM, and 28 archery-only), these tags will not be issued unless approved by the Director following a determination from the population management hunt review and approval process.

No substantive public comments were received regarding Population Management Seasons since the last public process for hunt guidelines and recommendations.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 26 – POPULATION MANAGEMENT SEASONS AS PROPOSED.**

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Attachments